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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 001132

SIPDIS

NEA FOR PDAS CHENEY, DAS CARPENTER, ARPI, PI

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [KMPI](#) [KPAO](#) [BA](#)

SUBJECT: PARALLEL CONFERENCES SEEK TO COMPLEMENT--AND
COMPETE WITH--THE NOVEMBER FORUM FOR THE FUTURE

REF: MANAMA 1094

Classified By: CDA Susan L. Ziadeh for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. The November 7-8 Parallel Conference of the Forum for the Future (PCFF) will bring together civil society (CS) organizations from the BMENA region and the G8 to discuss common issues. The GOB has said that it will support the PCFF only if its agenda does not overlap with the four BMENA Civil Society Dialogue thematic meetings sponsored by Bahrain, the U.S., the UK, and Qatar, which it strongly supports. PCFF organizers hope that they will be allowed to present to ministers at the November 11-12 G8-BMENA Forum for the Future. Other local Bahraini activists are considering a "second parallel conference" to discuss local issues, and may stage public protests. End summary.

PARALLEL CONFERENCE OF THE FORUM FOR THE FUTURE

12. (U) NEA/PI TDYer and Poloff met with Abdulnabi Al Ekry, coordinator of the Parallel Conference of the Forum for the Future, which will take place November 7-8 (reftel). Al Ekry is a member of the Bahrain Human Rights Society, but is organizing the PCFF in his personal capacity. He reported that the PCFF agenda will include six items:

11. Sustainable development
12. Reform, democracy, and human rights
13. Toward a stable and peaceful region (regional conflicts, nonproliferation)
14. Women,s issues: empowerment and political participation
15. Youth
16. Relationship between G8 and BMENA (including trade, culture, technology transfer)

Al Ekry said that GOB officials have questioned the need for the PCFF. He said he explained that while participants in the Civil Society Dialogue thematic meetings would be selected by the governments, a wider group of NGOs would participate in the PCFF (the organizers are planning for 105 non-Bahraini participants) and a wider range of topics discussed. He said that the committee had applied to the GOB for financial support but would not ask for a permit to meet because the committee is not registered. He said he has approached European governments for funding and is interested in applying for MEPI funds. He is asking G8 governments to persuade the GOB not to put obstacles in the way of the meeting, and welcomed U.S. suggestions of NGOs to invite.

13. (U) At the G8-BMENA Forum, Al Ekry envisions a small delegation from the PCFF presenting to ministers, along with representatives of the 4 civil society thematic meetings. He said that the GOB has said they may support this approach, although he said the GOB and UK Ambassador in Bahrain have emphasized that the PCFF should not duplicate the thematic meetings. He agreed with that approach, and said that to avoid duplication the PCFF will not discuss women,s economic empowerment and that transparency will not be a separate agenda item.

14. (C) In a conversation with Charge, Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, MFA Assistant U/S for Coordination and Follow-Up, confirmed that the GOB would support the PCFF only if the issues it considered are "BMENA themes" and are different from those discussed at the CS thematic meetings sponsored by Bahrain, Qatar, the U.S., and the UK. He said that he might raise the potential participation by the PCFF at the Forum at the planning meeting in London on September 9.

A SECOND PARALLEL CONFERENCE, AND POTENTIAL PROTESTS

15. (C) Separately, some local political societies are considering holding a "second parallel conference" and public protests that would focus on Bahrain-specific issues. Jasim Al-Ajmi of the Bahrain Transparency Society told NEA/PI TDYer and Poloff that the organizers include the now-closed Bahrain Center for Human Rights, the Cairo Center for Human Rights, religious groups, and the Bahrain Committee on the

Unemployed. Both Al-Ajmi and PCFF organizer Al Ekry said that they planned to meet with organizers to discourage them from a second parallel conference and protests. MFA's Shaikh Abdulaziz told Charge that the GOB would not support the meeting because focusing on one country's issues runs contrary to the BMENA initiative, which is region-wide. The GOB sees the Forum as an opportunity for Bahrain to showcase its reform efforts, and would not support events that would embarrass it.

16. (C) In a press conference on July 28, Shaikh Abdulaziz was quoted as saying that Bahraini authorities would not allow demonstrations during the Forum because "such activities are against the spirit of the Forum itself ... which is focused on the issues of the greater Middle East, and is not a forum for local issues." Speaking later to Charge, he said that the GOB expected demonstrations and that he did not believe that any peaceful march would be prohibited. However, he said that the GOB would not support protests by the societies organizing the "second parallel conference" on Bahrain's or any other country's issues.

17. (U) Minimize considered.
ZIADEH